



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, July 9, 2021

**Contact:** Joint Information Center  
sfeocjic@sfgov.org

**\*\*\* STATEMENT \*\*\***

**SAN FRANCISCO HEALTH OFFICER - DR. SUSAN PHILIP - ON  
SCHOOL REOPENING FOR FULL TIME IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION THIS FALL AS  
CDC ISSUES NEW GUIDANCE**

“I agree with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) strong focus on getting children back in school safely when the school year begins this fall. Given the proven health and educational benefits of in-person learning, our priority must be to continue to work together to ensure a smooth transition back to school for all grades at full capacity. [Health Officers](#) throughout the Bay Area agree and the evidence clearly shows that schools are safe environments for teachers, staff, and students when appropriate COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures are followed.

As we have done from the beginning of the pandemic, we are following the data, science, and facts to guide our public health measures and they have worked. In San Francisco, there were less than five cases of COVID transmission in schools with in-person learning among 48,000 students and teachers during the last school year, including during the height of our winter surge.

Since then, San Francisco has made incredible progress in the fight against COVID-19, thanks to the actions of everyone in our city. We now have one of the highest vaccination rates in the country, leading to low case rates. As a result, the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) anticipates that schools will have to implement fewer of the COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures used successfully last school year. While SFDPH carefully tracks and responds to the much more infectious Delta variant, research shows that current vaccines are highly effective in preventing infections and transmission even against this strain. In San Francisco, the vast majority of school-age children with COVID-19 contracted it from an unvaccinated adult in their household. When the adults in their lives are fully vaccinated, children are less likely to get COVID-19.

**What does a safer school environment include for the 2021-2022 school year in San Francisco?**

- All eligible students, staff, and families in our school communities should get vaccinated; schools should continue their good work to support this.
- Masks will continue to be required indoors, but not outdoors
- Hand hygiene either by washing hands or using hand sanitizer;
- Opening windows, adjusting HVAC systems, or using portable air cleaners to increase ventilation;
- Screen for symptoms of COVID-19 at home, not at schools;
- Test anyone with symptoms or are considered unvaccinated close contacts; and
- SFDPH will continue robust case investigation and contact tracing.



Schools in San Francisco should prioritize full in-person enrollment given the low community transmission at this time. Physical distancing will not be required in San Francisco, given low case rates and high vaccination rates. According to the CDC, “when it is not possible to maintain physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.” For this reason, as Health Officer, I am prioritizing indoor masking over physical distancing to ensure a safe return to school for all our children.

I urge school administrators, teachers, staff, and families in San Francisco to work together to prepare for full classrooms for all grades next school year. We look forward to seeing students, teachers and staff fully return to school in August.”